

# Dexter City Update

Spring 2021

Volume 7, Issue 1

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## State of the City

By Shawn Keough, Mayor

### Executive Summary

The State of the City of Dexter is strong and thankfully for the most part safe. It has been three years since my last State of the City newsletter article. In past articles, I have described the City as "vibrant". This year, with our nation continuing to face the challenges associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, I am proud to be able to use the word safe. Over the past year, our residents have faced many challenges – learning to work from home, navigating virtual get togethers, and having our children "go to school" in the living room or learn from their bedrooms. Our businesses have struggled as we have all been staying home more than we ever thought we would. Shopping used to be an activity to pass the time, and now we mostly shop out of necessity, rather than for fun. As of the date of this newsletter, restaurants are allowed to be open at 50% capacity.

Our town continues to thrive as a home for many, our schools continue to be an educational center for the kids of the greater Dexter community, and our plethora of recreational trails and parks have provided safe destinations for residents and visitors. The City has continued to focus on providing safe, secure public infrastructure and responsive public services. In the fall of 2020, our "Mill Creek Park – Phase 2 Path" public trail project was completed, expanding access to Mill Creek and the natural areas owned by the City and Dexter Community Schools. The trail also provides a new connection from downtown to Baker Road just north of Creekside Elementary School. We continue to build on our belief that access to recreation and our natural surroundings contributes to a desirable community. We have also continued to take pride in maintaining our streets, creating safer corridors for motorized and non-motorized transportation, and keeping our town clean. Our community's taxable value continues to increase overall. Our tax (millage) rate remains the lowest of any City in Washtenaw County. All in all, I believe we are all very lucky to call the City of Dexter our home.

We are not without our challenges. City Council is currently conducting goal setting sessions, as we begin preparations for the City's Budget for the 2021-2022 fiscal year. The 2021-2022 Budget will take effect on July 1, 2021. Our City staff, currently led by our Interim City Manager Justin Breyer, continue to make excellent decisions and are working hard every day to implement the services that we need and to provide stability in our government. We need to solidify our choice at the City Manager position and think about succession plans for other key staff positions. Together, we have worked hard to maintain our fiscal discipline each year. We continue to pay down debt. We continue to build reserves to address unfunded liabilities and we continue to plan for the future. And we may even have found a new home for our City offices...so let's dig a little deeper into the details.

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## State of the City

### Introduction

November 20, 2020 marked the 6<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the City of Dexter filing our City Charter. In accordance with Section 3.05 of the City Charter, it is my extreme honor and privilege to present this State of the City message. It starts with an overview of the many things taking place in the City of Dexter, especially as they relate to your City government, your tax dollars and the services they provide. Our City Council and staff have been entrusted with the responsibility of looking out for the long-term best interest of the City of Dexter. My goal in this newsletter is to describe how your tax dollars are being used to create a high quality of life and a safe place for all our residents, businesses and visitors. I also want to raise your general awareness of some of the challenges that we face in the years ahead and share some personal insights (vision) into how we are doing as a City overall.

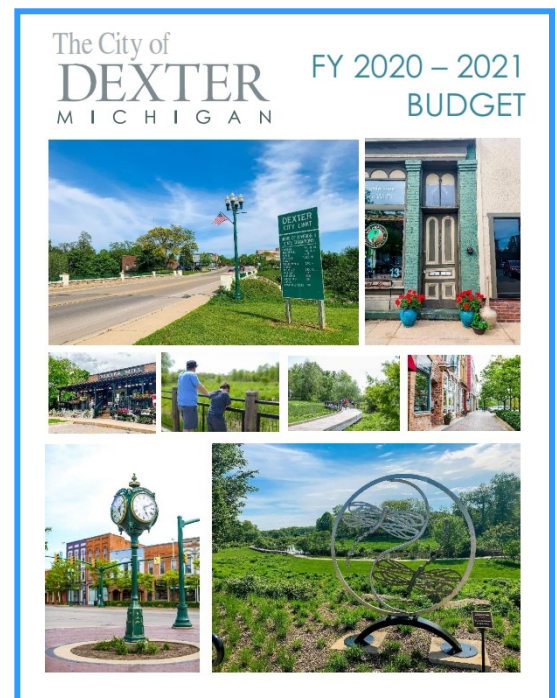
### A Stable and Consistent Approach

While there have been many new ideas discussed over the past three years, City Council continues to use a stable and consistent approach to open, fiscally responsible government. The 2019-2020 Fiscal Year ended on June 30, 2020, and we had another year where our spending was less than our revenue. Per the City's annual audit, we increased our savings by \$328,314 in the City's General Fund, and we reduced our debt by \$1,024,000 in all funds. We made decisions that addressed our present needs and had many discussions that set the direction for our future. City Council's job is to set policy based on the input of the people. We have a tremendous group of knowledgeable staff that implement those policies and manage our town on a daily basis. Top priorities include: 1) keeping our town safe, 2) continuously maintaining public infrastructure, and 3) making sure our downtown, parks and streets are clean and open to our residents and visitors.

### Impacts of COVID-19 on Public Services

Over the past year, like many businesses and destinations, we faced the challenge of how to "go to work" and to serve the public "from a safe distance." Delivering our core services with excellence continues to be paramount. Public services like leaf and brush collection, snow plowing, police and fire rescue, and organized refuse collection are a few of our core services that have remained the same. However, our first responders now face unprecedented challenges each time they respond to a medical emergency or deal with a domestic or traffic related incident. We are thankful that our Dexter Area Fire Department employees and deputies from the Washtenaw County Sheriff's Office have been there for all of us through this difficult time.

The COVID-19 pandemic limited the number of City staff that could work at one time. We created two sets of teams in our Water/Sewer and Public Works departments. These teams took turns covering shifts. They found a way to perform the most critical functions with less people on each daily shift. While not tenable long-term, this creative approach was implemented to keep our staff separated and safe, and thankfully, it has worked very well. Our main office staff also split time working in two teams, with one team working from home at a time. We encouraged the utilization of on-line bill payment and application submittals. We used Zoom for public meetings as well as regular staff meetings. We encouraged the use of mail and the City's drop boxes when online options were not available. Ultimately, we found and adapted to new ways of doing things. We are still embracing the mindset that change, while sometimes tough, often leads to innovation. Our staff size has remained essentially the same. I would like to thank and recognize each member of our City staff, current and past, who have helped us through this. They have all been terrific and continue to perform at a high level during this pandemic.



## State of the City

### Our Tax Structure - The Backbone of Public Services

Most residents are aware that we operate on a fiscal year that begins on July 1<sup>st</sup> and ends on June 30<sup>th</sup> of the following year. We are currently at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter of the City of Dexter's 2020 – 2021 Fiscal Year. We are already looking at the next fiscal year (2021 – 2022) and beyond. Each year in the months of February and March, City Council typically holds two or three public goal setting sessions to review and discuss priorities and goals for the upcoming fiscal year. This year, because we welcomed two new City Council members to our team, we held our first goal setting session in early January 2021, and held seven work sessions between January and March 2021.

As of the date of this letter, we are still conducting various goal setting sessions. This month, a draft budget will be prepared by our staff for Council review based on the goals discussed, the services required and needs of our community. Our budgeting process includes a draft budget that shows two years of projected revenue and expenditures and also includes a five-year financial projection. These tools allow us to review the impacts of short-term projects and see the effect of longer-term initiatives. We use the budgeting process to review and reinforce our disciplined approach to our long-term fiscal responsibilities. Our knowledgeable staff and Council work together in April and May to refine the draft budget and propose a tax millage rate. While public feedback is encouraged at all stages of the process, at the first meeting in June, Council will hold a public hearing on the proposed tax millage rate. At the following meeting Council will adopt a budget document that outlines the way that the tax revenue is programmed to be used for the new fiscal year that will start on July 1, 2021.

The budget document is presented in a line-item by line-item format to describe our revenues and our expenditures. The budget document outlines the costs of services, and the cost of our staff that oversees the implementation of the services. It serves as a guiding document for staff and Council based on the priorities established by City Council, with input from residents. Our budget document is available on the City's website and I would like to encourage every resident to review it.

I anticipate that the tax structure for the upcoming 2021-2022 Fiscal Year will be very similar to the previous tax years. During our current fiscal year, residents and property owners in the City of Dexter paid a total of 15.3062 mills for City taxes. This overall City millage is the sum of the City General Operating Fund (10.8987 mills) and City Street Fund (4.4075 mills).

A summary of the City's current tax structure for the current fiscal year 2020 - 2021 in comparison with the structure established in the City Charter and previous fiscal years is presented on the table on the next page.

### THANK YOU!

#### Office Staff:

Justin Breyer, Interim City Manager and Clerk  
Marie Sherry, Finance Director/  
Treasurer/Assessor  
Michelle Aniol, Community Development Manager  
Michael Auerbach, Assistant Planner  
Erin Aiken, Utility Billing Clerk  
Brenda Tuscano, Administrative Assistant

#### Public Utilities and DPW Staff

Daniel Schlaff, Public Services Superintendent  
Tim Stewart, Lead Operator  
Eric Hartman, Lead Operator  
Andrea Dorney, Chief Lab Technician  
Brad Dexter, Public Utility Operator  
Robert Mester, Public Utility Operator  
Todd Viebahn, Public Utility Operator  
Kurt Augustine, Streets Foreman  
Harold Gross, DPW Worker  
Shawn Chamberlain, DPW Worker  
Jacob Donner, DPW Worker

## State of the City

City of Dexter – Tax Structure					
Purpose	Original Maximum Rate established by the City Charter (1)	2020 Allowable Headlee Rate	2018 – 2019 Tax Structure	2019 – 2020 Tax Structure	2020 – 2021 Tax Structure (Current)
<b>General Operating</b>	12.5 mills	12.1009 mills	10.8987 mills	10.8987 mills	10.8987 mills
<b>Streets</b>	5.0 mills	4.8403 mills	3.4075 mills	4.4075 mills	4.4075 mills
<b>Total</b>	<b>17.5 mills</b>	<b>16.9412 mills</b>	<b>14.3062 mills</b>	<b>15.3062 mills</b>	<b>15.3062 mills</b>

The City of Dexter is proud to have the lowest total millage of any City in Washtenaw County. In total, City of Dexter residents pay a total of 47.4248 mills (homestead). Our homestead millage rate is lower than the Cities of Ann Arbor, Chelsea, Milan, Saline and Ypsilanti. Our City of Dexter millage rate of 15.3062 mills is also the lowest in Washtenaw County (by 0.2358 mills) when compared to those other 5 Cities. Generally, the millage rate x Taxable Value / 1000 = the property taxes residents pay.

As you can see from the tax structure chart above, there are 2 primary tax collection funds that make up the sum of our 15.3062 mill City tax structure. The two funds are our General Fund and our Street Fund.

Community	City Tax Rate	Total (Homestead)	Total (Non-Homestead)
Ann Arbor	16.3095	50.4649	64.7863
Chelsea	15.5420	48.0809	66.0809
<b>Dexter</b>	<b>15.3062</b>	<b>47.4248</b>	<b>65.4248</b>
Milan	17.2598	51.5332	69.5026
Saline	17.2294	49.3238	67.3238
Ypsilanti	36.1010	70.7099	88.7099
Source: 2020 Washtenaw County Apportionment Report			

### General Fund

The City's General Operating millage (10.8987 mills) supports the City's General Fund. The City's General Fund is the portion of the City Budget that is responsible for many of the public services that are provided to our residents. The revenue collected by the General Operating millage pays for:

- fire and emergency rescue (20.93%);
- police protection (18.46%);
- general management and elections (15.28%);
- department of public works (13.20%);
- insurance and contributions (10.62%);
- community and economic development (6.84%);
- parks, trees, and arts and culture (6.04%);
- finance and taxation (5.60%);
- debt service for public works building (3.03%);
- capital improvements (\$1,030,000 in FY 20-21)

**We are in a healthy financial position to continue funding the same essential services that our citizens expect and want.**



## State of the City

### Solid Waste

Our Solid Waste collection fee has increased slightly in recent years. In 2018, this fee was \$17.50 per month. Our current monthly collection fee is \$25 per month. A large portion of this increase is due to 1) the market for recyclables, as the cost to haul recycled materials has increased dramatically, and 2) the improved method of garbage collection and uniform waste container system that we implemented in 2019. This fee is collected as part of your bi-monthly utility bill. Our refuse and recycling contractor, Waste Management continues to offer residents one large bulk pick up item on the first Monday of each month in addition to their normal curbside collection. Spring and Fall Clean-Up Days allow for expanded bulk collection on the 3<sup>rd</sup> Mondays of May and October, respectively. The monthly Solid Waste Collection fee also covers the cost of curbside yard waste collection, fall leaf pick up, brush collection (typically Wednesdays), and Christmas tree pickup.

### Street Millage

The City's Street millage (4.4075 mills) helps cover the cost of taking care of our major and local streets. The City receives additional funding, commonly referred to as Act 51 Funding, from the State of Michigan for each mile of street in our network. The City receives more funding per mile for major streets than local streets. Baker, Broad, Central, Dan Hoey, Dexter-Ann Arbor, Fourth, Hudson, Main, Second and a small portion of Third between Broad and Central meet the State's criteria for major streets, and have been designated as such in the City of Dexter. The remaining streets in Dexter are considered local streets according to the State's designation. However, State funding alone is not enough to take care of our streets.

The combination of State funding and the City of Dexter Street millage covers the cost of: sweeping streets; plowing snow; maintaining our streets, alleys, sidewalks, traffic signals, pedestrian crossing signals (Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons); street signage; storm water drainage systems; and staffing, equipment and materials (i.e. salt, asphalt for patching, etc.) required to provide these important services. We are lucky because we do not have any State Highways or major County roads that go directly through the City. Our roads are under our jurisdiction and we are able to make local decisions regarding how and when to maintain them.

In 2018, the City partnered with the Road Commission to complete the construction of two roundabouts at Dan Hoey and Shield. That project received \$1,300,000 in Federal funding that was leveraged with County and City local dollars to complete the project. In 2019, the City completed the reconstruction of Central Street from 3<sup>rd</sup> Street to just north of Monument Park, utilizing \$520,000 in federal funds along with our local street funds. In 2020, the City completed the reconstruction of Grand Street from Hudson to Kensington as well as the reconstruction of Hudson from Dexter Ann Arbor to Forest. We are currently planning the reconstruction of 3<sup>rd</sup> Street from Central to Broad Street, which is a dedicated truck route for north south traffic. This project will also be partially funded with approximately \$370,000 in federal funds. We are also planning improvements in the Dexter Crossing Subdivision, including Bristol and Kingsley.

I would like to thank all of the residents who have been patient during these much needed construction projects and for residents that have brought attention to local roads, alleys and sidewalk conditions that need attention. We are all responsible for looking



Grand Street 2020

## State of the City

Our road improvement plan utilizes a combination of resurfacing, reconstruction and maintenance techniques. These techniques, such as crack sealing, micro-surfacing and cape sealing, when applied appropriately and timely, prolong the life cycle of our streets, and extend the value of the original street investment. The City will continue its crack sealing program again in 2021 – 2022.

Last, but not least, a portion of our street funding is used each year to keep our town walkable and accessible to all. In 2019, we were able to fund the addition of 4 Rectangular Rapid Flashing Beacons (RRFBs). These enhanced crosswalk alert devices make it easier to cross at mid-block locations on Baker, Dexter Ann Arbor Road, and Dan Hoey. The City's annual sidewalk improvement project will continue again this year with a focus on uneven sidewalk areas and improvements to ADA ramps.

## Water and Sewer Funds

The City's Water and Sewer Funds are often referred to as Enterprise Funds. These funds are not covered by the tax structures described above. Instead, the funding for our water and sewer funds comes directly through water and sewer rates paid by utility system users. The City's water and sewer rates are established each year in June by a vote of City Council following a public hearing. Both funds are managed so that they are self-sustaining, which means that the rates our residents pay each year cover the costs of operating and maintaining our public water system and public sewer system. Each fund maintains a reserve balance in case of emergencies. Our water and sewer systems are essential components of the core of the City's infrastructure and are a vital part of providing a safe and healthy community. The City has 7 full-time staff assigned to operate, maintain and manage our water and sewer systems.

Our water system remains safe and in good operating condition. Our water system consists of two well fields (with 5 total wells), a filtration plant, a distribution system, and a water tower. The two well fields are separate and pull water from independent underground aquifers. This provides redundancy during periods of high use and our staff operate the two fields in such a way that we allow each aquifer the proper time to recharge. In 2019, we sand blasted and painted the inside of our water tower. These types of maintenance activities prolong the condition of our water system assets. They often create a small amount of short-term inconvenience (i.e. water restrictions during the maintenance), however, they are essential in order to provide safe drinking water and fire protection for all of our residents and businesses. **Please note that the City will continue to operate during the summer months on mandatory outdoor odd-even watering restrictions.** Not only is it environmentally prudent to conserve our water supply, we do not have the capacity to continually stress our aquifers during the high demand periods in the summer months. The watering restrictions allow for the safe recharge of our two aquifers and show an appreciation for this most valuable resource. Please help us conserve our water.

Our sewer system is also in good condition, although many of the sewers are older in age. Our wastewater treatment plant (WWTP) is over 40 years old and we have continued to make improvements to the plant. Residents may recall that in 2015, we completed sludge digester improvements. We have found that these improvements have been successful in lowering our energy costs through sustainable design and reuse of energy. We re-use the methane gas from the digesting process to help heat the WWTP. In 2016, we completed improvements to the aeration process by completing electrical system upgrades and replacing one of our blowers with a newer, more energy efficient model. In 2018 and 2019, we completed over \$5 million in improvements to the headworks and tertiary treatment systems of the WWTP. The term "headworks" refers to the initial mechanical components at the WWTP where stones, grit, sticks, sand and other inorganics are removed from the wastewater to reduce wear on the downstream treatment components of the WWTP. Our wastewater treatment plant operates well, and we are consistently meeting our wastewater discharge limits in accordance with our State of Michigan permit, however we must continue to invest to keep it operating properly.

## State of the City

### Communication and Transparency

Communication and transparency continue to be a very important part of our local government. We strive to excel in both areas every day. Our website is full of information about upcoming events and meetings. Our staff utilizes the website ([www.dextermi.gov](http://www.dextermi.gov)), our City Facebook page (<https://www.facebook.com/City-of-Dexter-Michigan-261417684307/>) and our Email Update system to regularly share all types of information. All of our City Council, Planning Commission and other board packets are available online in advance of the public meetings. We are working hard to make sure our residents have access to the information that is being used to make decisions. Over the past year, the City has been meeting virtually using Zoom as the platform for our public meetings. We have recorded those meetings and recently voted to put the video recording of our City Council and Planning Commission meetings on the website for additional public access.

If you are not signed up to receive emails via our email update system, please send your name and email address to our Interim City Manager, Justin Breyer at [jbreyer@dextermi.gov](mailto:jbreyer@dextermi.gov) and he will get you signed up.

As part of our effort to communicate, we regularly send letters to residents about upcoming projects, including but not limited to roads projects and tree trimming. We strive to mail up to 4 newsletters per year to each home and business in the City, and we have a recently updated Resident Handbook available for all residents as a comprehensive resource for information on City services. We will continue to hold open forums on larger topics whenever it makes sense to do so, however during the pandemic all public meetings are being held using the virtual technology platform Zoom. As your Mayor, I will personally continue to prepare a written report of my activities and conversations for each Council packet. City Council also has the opportunity to submit written reports for the packet. These are all examples of our commitment to share information. Please feel free to provide feedback on how we are doing.

### With an Eye Toward the Future

As we look to the future, City Council and our professional staff are working closely to prepare the City for our short-term needs as well as to set us up for long-term success. This is happening in many areas and I would like to comment on a few of them:

"Stick to the Plan" to prepare for our long-term unfunded liabilities:

- Continue to reduce our unfunded pension liability – the City has approximately \$626,900 in unfunded liability related to long term pension benefits for current and retired employees. While the City no longer offers a defined benefit plan and has opened defined contribution plans for new employees, we still need to invest annually to fund the pension benefits that were previously promised. The City's defined pension plan was 67% funded in 2008. As of December 31, 2021, the system is 85% funded. We have done very well over the years to build up this fund and need to stick to our plan and keep saving.
- Continue to save money for our future long-term retiree health care obligations. While the City no longer offers this benefit to new employees, we need to continue to save money to pay for the health care costs of some of our current employees when they retire. We are required to do an actuarial evaluation every two years, which shows that the City needs to save approximately \$2,270,700 total. In 2008, we started saving to address this unfunded long-term liability, and as of June 30, 2020, we have saved \$1,730,000. We are currently saving a minimum of \$100,000 per year, between the general and enterprise funds, to build this savings account.

## State of the City

### Improve our City Offices:

- Our current space (1,700 sq ft) on the second floor of the PNC Bank building is woefully inadequate (i.e. too small and very cramped). While our employees have “made it work” for nearly 20 years, they deserve a newer, more professional space to serve our residents and businesses.
- In February 2021, City Council toured the old mill building located along the railroad tracks at 3515 Broad Street. This historic building, constructed in the late 1800s has been used as a lumber mill and grain elevator. The two most recent owners of the building (Gilbert Company and Med Hub) renovated the space into offices and several open spaces. It recently came up for sale for \$1,986,000.
- On February 22, 2021, after two tours, City Council unanimously voted to place an offer on that building as a potential use for City Hall. I am extremely excited about this opportunity and hope that we can complete the purchase. Our offer requested 120 days for due diligence so that we could complete an inspection of the building, get the property appraised, and review possible modifications (and associated costs) to the building to improve its access for public use (i.e. the building does not currently have an elevator).
- On March 22, 2021, City Council unanimously passed a “Notice of Intent to Issue Capital Improvement Bonds” resolution. The resolution is the initial step in a process to provide notice to the public that the City MAY issue up to \$2,500,000 in bonds to generate money to complete the purchase or renovation of a property for City Offices. This notice is not specific to 3515 Broad Street, however any money received from the issuance of this new debt is specifically designated for City Offices. While the final discussion on how to pay for this potential property purchase will occur over the next several weeks, in my opinion, this resolution provides the City with an option on how to pay for the building and was another very positive step toward finding a new home for City Offices.
- The purchase agreement requires the City to make a final decision by June 26, 2021. Please stay tuned regarding this wonderful opportunity to improve our City Offices.

### Improve our Fire Station:

- In August 2019, City Council acquired land along Dexter Ann Arbor Road at Meadowview with the intent of building a new fire station on that property. The City paid \$544,283 for the 2.38 acre parcel. A rendering of the potential new station has been publicly displayed on a sign near the corner of Meadowview and Dexter Ann Arbor Road.
- The most recent cost estimate for the construction of our new station is \$7,380,000. This cost estimate was last updated in December 2019.
- In early 2020, City Council discussed placing a general obligation millage on the ballot to get voter approval of funding to pay for a new fire station. Ultimately, City Council removed this initiative from the ballot due to concerns related to the pandemic and the uncertainty of what impacts the COVID-19 virus would have on our residents and businesses and their ability to pay for a millage.
- City Council is currently discussing next steps. I anticipate that there will be future consideration for a similar question to be placed on a future ballot.

### Dexter Public

#### Services Fun Facts

#### **Population**

The City's population increased from 2,338 in 2000 to 4,067 in 2010. Our estimated population in 2020 was 4,694 (SEMCOG).

#### **Capital Improvements**

In the last five years we have spent \$12M for capital improvements, including \$1.28M for parks and trails and \$500,000 for sidewalks and pedestrian enhancements.

#### **Grants**

In the past five years we have applied for and received \$1.23M in grant funding, or \$262 for City resident.

#### **Elections**

The 2020 Election was the highest turnout election since the City took over the responsibility of running elections at 85%. The voter turnout in the City of Dexter is consistently higher than the Washtenaw County average, which in turn is consistently higher than the State of Michigan average.



## State of the City

### Redevelopment of the Old DAPCO Site (3045 Broad Street)

- In 2008, the Dexter Downtown Development Authority entered into an agreement to purchase the property commonly known by the address 3045 Broad Street. The purchase was finalized in 2012. The old DAPCO buildings were torn down shortly after the purchase was finalized.
- In 2018, the City entered into an agreement with DTE to acquire the property that used to contain one of the original DTE substations. In the agreement, the City swapped property that we owned on Dan Hoey with DTE for the substation property. The agreement also required the City to pay for electric system upgrades on Broad Street as part of the demolition of the substation.
- In 2020, the DTE substation on Broad Street between Forest and Grand was demolished and the City completed the agreement with DTE to swap property. The City and DDA now own all of the property between Broad Street and Mill Creek Park.
- The City and DDA are currently partnering with Norfolk Homes to come up with a redevelopment plan for the property. Norfolk's team of architects and planners has created a vision for both sides of Broad Street between Forest and Grand.
- City/DDA goals for the property include finding a development that "fits" Dexter, one that compliments the park, adds taxable value, office space and residents to the downtown. Additional factors that are being considered include traffic circulation, parking, access to the trail system and pedestrian connectivity.
- Redeveloping this property remains a priority for the future.

### Student Participation

In early 2019, City Council made the decision to add non-voting student representatives to our City Council, Planning Commission, Parks Commission, and Arts Culture & Heritage Committee. In our first year, 8 students had the opportunity to participate as regular members of our government bodies. This year, 10 students are participating and learning about our government. As Council Members, we are trying to provide an environment that allows for the students to learn and participate. We are also gaining wonderful perspective from the next generation. Student participation is a one-year term (June to June) and students have to apply and be accepted for the positions. We are currently accepting applications for new student participation for the term June 2021 to June 2022.

### Recognition of Community Member Participation on City Boards and Committees

Dexter's success as a community is the result of many people who care and invest their time in many ways. I would like to recognize and thank all the members of City Council, and our many Boards and Commissions for their dedication and commitment to serving our community. Their energy and passion are appreciated. My sincerest thank you to each of you for volunteering and working hard for your community, especially over the past year during the pandemic. Job well done!

### Dexter Public

#### Services Fun Facts

#### **Community Garden**

Our community gardeners plant everything from acorn squash to zucchini, often donating excess produce to Faith in Action, our local food pantry.

#### **Farmers Market**

The Farmers Market averages 13 vendors per market day, selling meats, veggies, jams, breads and various arts and craft items.

#### **Temporary Sculptures**

There will be four temporary art locations within the City in 2021. New sculptures are selected for those locations each year.

#### **Water Service**

The City's public water system supplies an average of 533,000 gallons of water per day to the City residents and businesses. Our wastewater treatment plant treats an average of 365,000 gallons of wastewater per day.

## State of the City

### Parks/Trails Updates

Parks and trails continue to be a high priority for the City. In September of 2020, the City completed another fantastic section of trail. The new trail segment extends Mill Creek Park to the south and follows Mill Creek until the trail turns due east to connect to Baker Road just north of the Creekside Middle School athletic property. This new section adds approximately one mile of trail to the City's network, and provides recreational opportunities year 'round for walking, jogging, biking and nature watching. This project was completed with over \$600,000 in grant dollars from two sources – the Washtenaw County Connecting Communities Fund and a State of Michigan Transportation Alternatives Program Grant. We were able to leverage these grants along with approximately \$800,000 in City reserve funds over several fiscal years to design and construct the new trail. I would like to give recognition to the Dexter Community School Board for their cooperation in planning the new trail. The School Board provided a key easement for a portion of this new trail, and without their help this new trail would not have been possible. We appreciate their help and partnership very much! The proximity of the trail to the schools has made it part of the Dexter Cross Country Team's training route as well.

We continue to monitor the use of our trails and the number of users is incredible. Pedestrian counters were installed in two places along our trail system – one on the B2B trail to Hudson Mills Metropark and the other on the B2B trail to Dexter Huron. In 2020, the trail from Central Street to Dexter Huron had a count of 137,257 pedestrian and cyclist trips while the trail from downtown Dexter to Hudson Mills counted 287,527 pedestrian and cyclist trips. Early counts taken in October 2020 showed an average of 400 users per weekday and over 700 on weekend days on the newest section of trail.



Our next trail project will likely involve some sort of participation to connect up with the trail that is making its way from Chelsea to Dexter. While the timing and funding for this next project is uncertain at this point, City Council is looking at options on how to accomplish this. We are in the planning stage.

### Dexter Public

#### Services Fun Facts

##### **Volunteers**

There are approximately 65 people generously giving their time and energy to serve on city boards and commissions, as well as 70 people who are or have served as election workers.

##### **Budget Award**

The City (and Village) of Dexter has received the Government Finance Officer's Distinguished Budget Award every year since 2009.

##### **Fire Service**

In 1877, the Village of Dexter purchased their first hook and ladder truck, axes and pails and formed the "Hook & Ladder Company #1". More than 100 years later, in 1985, the Dexter Area Fire Department (DAFD) was created. The DAFD services the City of Dexter, Dexter Township, and Webster Township and all of the communities have representation on the DAFD's governing board.

##### **Registered Voters**

There are approximately 3,500 registered voters in the City of Dexter.

## State of the City

### Summary and Closing

In closing, the State of the City of Dexter is strong, and our town continues to be safe. While the City of Dexter continues to operate in a solid financial position, there is so much more to our story. Dexter is a wonderful destination full of opportunity, knowledge and fun. Our local economy is diverse, and I am thankful for all the local business owners that invest each day in our community. Dexter's small-town charm and friendly people are symbolic of the spirit of this community. We are lucky to live in a community that cares about each other. Dexter is a unique place where friends become part of your family.

On behalf of the entire City Council and our staff, we are working hard to balance your tax dollars, to provide high quality services, to pay down debt, to save for the future and to create a community with a high quality of life.

If you have any questions or ideas after reading this State of the City, please contact any member of our staff or City Council. We are working together to provide the very best services we can. We appreciate and encourage all feedback.

I hope you have enjoyed reading this special State of the City message and our newsletter and look forward to seeing you around our town!

Thank you,

Shawn Keough, Mayor  
[skeough@dextermi.gov](mailto:skeough@dextermi.gov)  
313.363.1434 (cell)

## Acceptance of Applications to Fill City Council Vacancy

The City of Dexter is seeking candidates interested in serving as a City Council Member.

The City of Dexter has been notified that a Dexter City Council Member position will be vacated on March 31, 2021. City Council is required by City Charter to fill the vacancy for the remainder of the term, which ends in November of 2022.

The City Council Member position is a non-partisan position, and candidates must meet the following qualifications to hold City Office:

- Must be a resident of the City of Dexter for a minimum of one year.
- Must be at least 18 years of age.

Interested candidates are asked to provide a Letter of Intent, which includes the candidate's name, address, contact information, and a description of their interest in the position. Letters of Intent should be submitted to Justin Breyer, Interim City Manager no later than 4:00 pm on Friday, April 16, 2021. Applications may be submitted by e-mail to [Jbreyer@Dextermi.gov](mailto:Jbreyer@Dextermi.gov), or mail/drop-off at 8123 Main St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Dexter, MI 48130.

## Student Representatives

The City of Dexter is accepting applications for Student Board Representatives to: the Dexter City Council; Planning Commission; Parks and Recreation Commission; and Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee. These positions are designed to be mutually beneficial to both the students and the Committees or Commissions on which they serve. The students shall be provided the opportunity for a tremendous learning experience about the workings of local government and the policymaking process, while the Committees and Commissions benefit by having the perspectives of younger members of the community. Student representatives shall not have voting privileges, but may participate in all discussions.

Eligible applicants must live in the Dexter Community School District (preference will be given to City residents), and be in grades 9 – 12 (preference will be given to students in grades 11 – 12). Students who attend private school, public school, or home school are welcome to apply. Applicants should demonstrate an interest in local government, a willingness to learn about complex issues, confidence in sharing their opinion and speaking in front of a large group, and a commitment to the Dexter community. Applicants should also desire to serve as a liaison between the City of Dexter and the student population. To view a full description of the Student Representative Program, or to complete an application, please visit the City's website at: [https://www.dextermi.gov/Permits\\_and\\_Forms/General\\_Permits/Student\\_Representative\\_Application.pdf](https://www.dextermi.gov/Permits_and_Forms/General_Permits/Student_Representative_Application.pdf). Completed applications can be e-mailed to [Jbreyer@dextermi.gov](mailto:Jbreyer@dextermi.gov) or mailed to 8123 Main St., 2nd Floor, Dexter, MI 48130.

## Paint Dexter Plein Air Festival

The Dexter Arts, Culture, and Heritage Committee would like to announce that the 2021 Paint Dexter Plein Air Festival is moving forward, but will continue the modifications from 2020 in accordance with Covid-19 guidelines.

- Artists are still being invited to come and paint in the community.
- There will be no in-person Festival Tent, exhibit, public reception, or workshops. Instead, an online exhibit will open at the end of the event for artists to sell their paintings to the general public.
- We will ask artists to maintain social distancing guidelines, and wear masks when unable to maintain at least 6' separation from other artists and area residents.



## Public Works Summer Help

The City of Dexter is seeking candidates to fill multiple part-time, temporary summer positions with the Department of Public Works. No experience required. Primary tasks include lawn mowing and general maintenance activities. Work hours for this position are 7:00 am to 3:30 pm Monday through Friday. The position is expected to last through September (depending on availability). Starting pay is \$10 - \$14 per hour. Applicants must be 18 or older. An application can be downloaded at [https://www.dextermi.gov/Permits\\_and\\_Forms/General\\_Permits/Employment\\_Application\\_2020-02.pdf](https://www.dextermi.gov/Permits_and_Forms/General_Permits/Employment_Application_2020-02.pdf) and should be returned to the City Office - 8123 Main, 2nd floor of the PNC Bank. Applications may also be e-mailed to [jbreyer@dextermi.gov](mailto:jbreyer@dextermi.gov). The positions will be open until filled.



## Farmers Market Manager

The City of Dexter is seeking an energetic, highly organized, and self-motivated Farmers Market Manager. The Farmers Market Manager is a part-time position, and will work approximately 450 hours per calendar year, including during Saturday and Tuesday Farmers Market dates. The starting pay for this position is \$14 per hour. The Farmers Market is open from May through October. The successful candidate will be under the direction of the City Manager or their designee. The Market Manager will be responsible for the successful operation of the Dexter Farmers Market, including: managing the Market during its hours of operation and coordinating market day logistics such as assignment of stalls, customer service, programming, community group participation, and monitoring safety and cleanliness. The position will also be responsible for such duties as: vendor recruitment, advertisement, engaging community partners, event planning, and implementation of the use of food assistance programs at the Market. The Manager will also be required to produce an end of the season report that will be distributed to City Council and made available on the City website.

To view the position description and access the City's employment application, please visit the City's website at: [https://www.dextermi.gov/government/job\\_and\\_committee\\_openings.php](https://www.dextermi.gov/government/job_and_committee_openings.php). Applicants are asked to submit a completed application form, cover letter, and resume to the City of Dexter, 8123 Main St., 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Dexter, MI 48130 or by e-mail to [Jbreyer@dextermi.gov](mailto:Jbreyer@dextermi.gov). The position is open until filled.

## Dexter Farmers Market



The Dexter Farmers Market will open for the season on Saturday, May 1, 2021. Market hours are Saturday from 8:00 am to 1:00 pm; and Tuesday from 2:00 pm to 6:00 pm.

The Market will host an excellent line-up of produce, annual and perennial plants, and artisan products. In addition, talented musicians, vocalists, and artists will provide

a lively atmosphere every Saturday.

Please contact the Market Manager at [Farmersmarket@dextermi.gov](mailto:Farmersmarket@dextermi.gov) for more information.

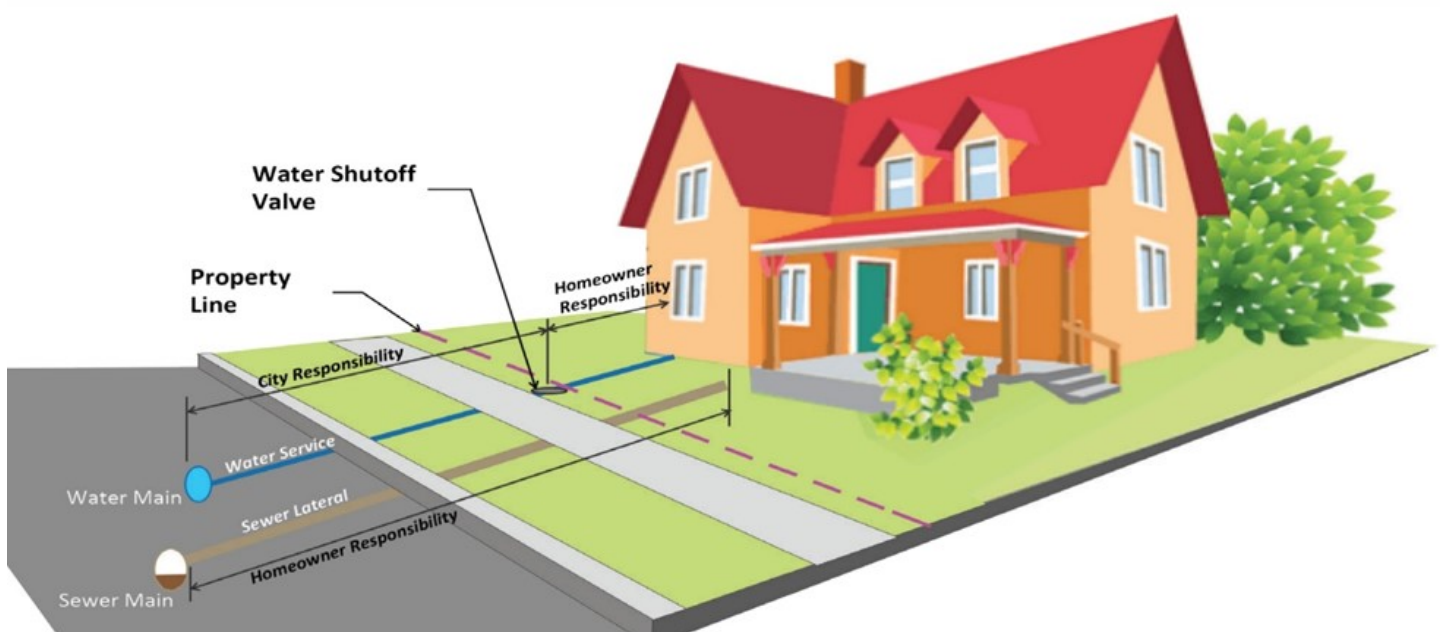
## Protecting Community Green Space

The public parks and trails located throughout Dexter are fundamental to the City's appeal and character. As the Covid-19 pandemic continues, the maintenance and care of communal green space is increasingly important; our parks and trails provide an escape from the indoors, at a time when we have been asked to temporarily spend much of our time at home. Ensuring our parks and trails are clean, safe, and welcoming to all takes a community effort. If you see litter, please pick it up and place it in one of the refuse bins provided. When using the City's parks, trails, and pathways, please be aware of your surroundings and be courteous to other users. Please also respect the public art on display and take pride in the beautiful outdoor reaction areas we have. The City remains committed to fostering a sense of community-wide ownership of our parks, and hopes all residents will join us in this effort!

## Water Meters, How They Work, and What They Tell Us

The City of Dexter uses water meters to identify how much water and sanitary sewer services are used at a given location. Over time things change, and water meters are no exception. Just over 20 years ago it was necessary for the Utilities staff to visit homes to manually collect meter readings. Meters have evolved, and Dexter implemented upgrades that allow Utilities staff to collect meter readings via radio devices called MXUs (Meter Transceiver Unit). MXUs are connected to meters and allow meter reads to be transmitted short distances to a hand-held receiver, eliminating regular visits for meter reads. The next stage in meter evolution are the digital or "Smart" meters. It used to be the case that every water connection came with a mechanical meter, but we are experiencing the gradual shift towards more and more smart meters in our system. Currently, Dexter's utility system is about one-half mechanical meters and one-half smart meters.

The purpose of this article is to explain how the two types of meters work and what they can tell us. But first, we should talk about typical water system configuration and connections. Regardless of the meter almost all properties in the city of Dexter are connected to the public water system through what is called a service lead (see picture below). The service lead is a water line used to connect buildings to water transmission mains in the public right-of-way (right-of-way is generally the space from the sidewalk to the road). The City is responsible for construction, operation, maintenance and repairs of water transmission mains in the public right-of-way. Respectively, property owners are responsible for the service line on their property. The division of responsibility occurs at what is called a curb stop or shutoff valve, which is typically located at the boundary line between private property and the public right-of-way. From here, the property owner's service line will then enter a structure of some kind (typically a basement or crawlspace) where the water meter is located. Due to freezing temperatures in winter months, the meters must be protected from low temperatures to prevent damage. If you want help identifying your water meter, please contact Dexter City Office at 734-426-8303 to schedule a house call.



## Water Meters, How They Work, and What They Tell Us (Cont.)

### Mechanical Meters

Mechanical meters (pictured right), most common in the original village area, are constructed of metal (mostly brass) with a plastic register on top. This plastic register is what keeps track of water usage. The register is a counter that is mechanically driven by an impeller as water moves through the meter body. It is important to note that without water movement there is no energy source to move the counter. Mechanical meters need at minimum 0.1 gpm (gallons per minute) of flow to turn the impeller. The register has a seven-digit counter allowing it to display usage up to 9,999,999 gallons before restarting at 0. City utility billing is configured so that one unit of water equals 1,000 gallons of usage. From a billing view we only look



at four digits starting at thousand up to million resulting in the four-digit usage number you may be familiar with on your water bill.



Mechanical registers have what is called a leak indicator on the display, this is a small triangle, disk or dial (left picture) that turns when water is flowing through the meter. This leak indicator is useful when a leak is suspected as it will show usage as low as 0.1 gpm.

### “Smart” Meters

Smart meters are constructed of plastic with a digital display on top. These meters have no moving parts and measure water usage by observing disruption of a magnetic field in the meter body as water flows through. The digital display keeps track of usage. This display offers similar information found on the mechanical register.



Smart meters also have a leak indicator; it looks like an incomplete circle that will have a flashing + symbol in it when water is moving forward and a – symbol if it is moving backward. These meters have a higher level of precision being able to detect usage as low as 0.01 gpm. The display shows 9 numbers the first 7 are the same as the mechanical meter with the addition of two decimal places. The display of 9 numbers also has a dashed line above the four digits starting at thousand up to million to aide in identifying what numbers are used to calculate water bills. These meters are called smart because in addition to metering like their mechanical counterparts they have the ability to store the past 30-days of water usage in hour-by-hour snapshots. This information is accessible by a house call where the Public Utilities staff can download the information to a computer for viewing. Usage data has recently become available for download through the MXU radio units.

## Lawn Maintenance Reminders

Spring is here, and the grass and weeds are growing rapidly. As a result, the City is receiving complaints about unmaintained property. The Office of Community Development would like to remind property owners, including owners of rental property or vacant lots, that local ordinances require routine lawn maintenance. Grass and/or weeds exceeding eight inches in height are considered a public nuisance. Once a complaint is lodged, the Code Enforcement Officer must conduct an inspection, and issue a violation notice if a public nuisance is observed.

Failure to mitigate the violation (i.e. mow the lawn/pull the weeds) can result in the issuance of a ticket and possible fine(s). For more information about property maintenance and code enforcement, please contact the Office of Community Development 734-580-2233/35.

Also, please do not blow grass clippings into the street when mowing your lawn. These clippings travel into our storm sewer system which can cause the drains to clog. If you have a landscaping company that mows your lawn please pass this information along to them.

## City Ordinance Reminders

Did you know...

Dog waste must be collected and disposed of in a trash can. The City has provided trash receptacles and dog waste disposal units throughout town. Dog waste is not suitable for recycle bins, compost piles or storm drains. Not collecting dog waste or intentionally throwing into a City storm drain is an ordinance violation. (City Ordinance Sec. 10-37)

Trash cans, recyclables, and compost bags should be placed out at the street no earlier than 5:00 pm on Sunday. All materials need to be out at the curb by 7:00 am Monday morning. (City Ordinance Sec. 38-74)

Riding a bicycle on the sidewalks downtown is not permitted. Bicycle riders should walk their bike on the sidewalk in the downtown area. This is especially important to avoid collisions right in front of entrances to our downtown businesses. (City Ordinance Section 54-133)



### Please Don't Flush "Flushable" Wipes

Certain brands of bathroom wipes are advertised as "flushable". In reality, this is not the case. As City utilities staff performs preventative maintenance on the sewer system, piles of these wipes are found to have coagulated in the pipes. These piles of wipes can not only cause a back up in the line of the home using them, they can also lead to a back up in the sewer main causing damage to other properties in the area. Please prevent this from

happening by throwing wipes in the trash.

Other items that should not be flushed include diapers, paper towels, cooking grease, prescription drugs, and any garage waste products (i.e. oil, gasoline, antifreeze).



## High Water Usage

An unexpectedly high utility bill can be very challenging for a household budget. Typically, when a resident receives a high water bill, Utility Department staff is called to the home to help determine the cause; the top five are listed below. We hope that sharing them will help to prevent the shock of a high utility bill.

- Running toilet(s)
- Water softener problem
- Water back-up system on sump pump running
- Furnace humidifier issue
- Irrigation leak/running outdoor faucet

The simple way to double check that you are not using water unnecessarily is to turn off all of the water in your house and look at the water meter. If the numbers on the meter are increasing, even though everything is turned off, you likely have a leak. Staff often goes into a home and can immediately hear the water running; it can be easy to become accustomed to it as background noise. If you do hear water running, it is important to find its source, as even a small leak can greatly impact the bill.

If you receive a high bill that you will have trouble paying on time, please contact the City Office as soon as possible so that payment arrangements can be made.

## Mandatory Outdoor Watering Restrictions

As a reminder, the City prohibits outdoor water usage between 6:00 am and 10:00 am, with odd/even water restrictions. Residents and businesses with odd numbered addresses (ending in 1, 3, 5, 7, 9) may do outdoor watering only on odd numbered dates. Likewise, those with even numbered addresses (2, 4, 6, 8, 0) may do outdoor watering only on even numbered dates. A simple adjustment of the start time of your irrigation system control can achieve this.

Thank you for your cooperation as we work to protect and conserve our water resources.

## Coal Tar Ban

In 2016 the Dexter City Council passed an ordinance banning the use of coal tar based pavement sealants. Serious health concerns have been raised from the use of coal tar based sealants. Coal tar contains chemicals called polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), which have been identified as a probable human carcinogen. Coal tar is often found in the sealants and used on asphalt driveways and parking lots.

Those that apply sealant to driveways and parking lots are required to register with the City of Dexter. Anyone who applies a coal tar or high-PAH sealant may be subject to up to a \$10,000 fine or up to 90 days in jail. To access the City's sealant applicator application, please visit

[www.dextermi.gov](http://www.dextermi.gov).



## Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Control Ordinance Update: Form-Based Code

The City of Dexter has begun an update of the City's Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Control Ordinance, led by a sub-committee of elected and appointed City officials with support from City planning staff and consultants. The Zoning Ordinance is the local law regulating the location and size of buildings, what “uses” (e.g., residential, commercial, industrial) can happen where, sign location and size, and the landscaping, parking and environmental protections needed with new building and redevelopment. The Subdivision Control Ordinance mandates the design and layout of streets, landscaping, and property lines for future residential, commercial, and industrial subdivisions.

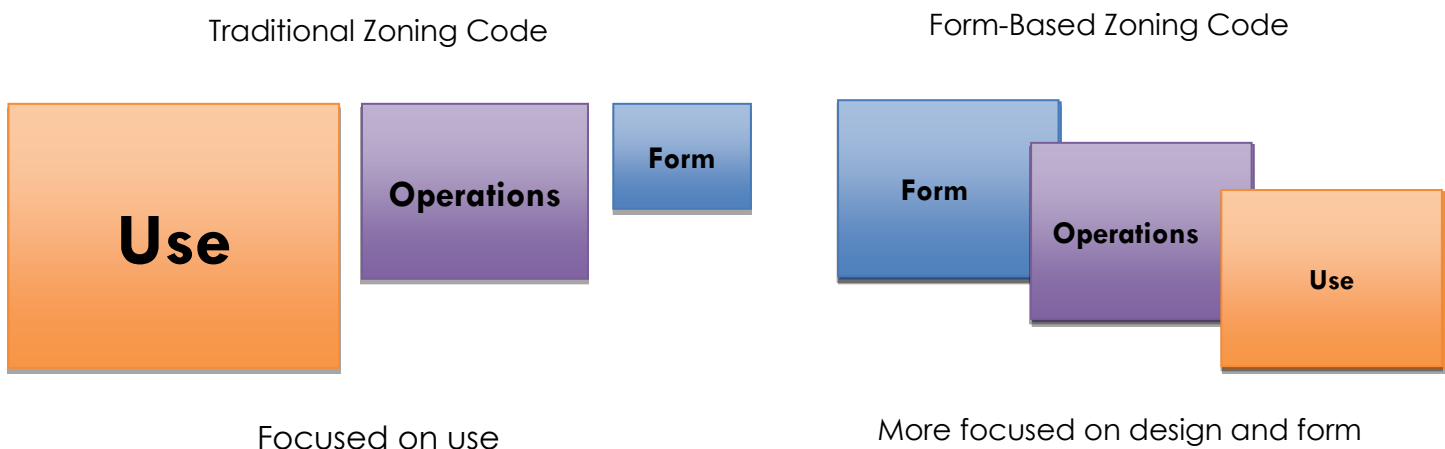
Form-based zoning codes are one of the updates that the Sub-committee will consider. This article provides an overview of form-based code, how it relates to the City's Master Plan, and the next steps for considering form-based codes for adoption.

### What is a Form-Based Code?

Form-based code is an approach to zoning that emphasizes built form over land use. Built form is the type and location of buildings, while land use is what happens on a site, such as housing, shopping, offices, manufacturing, etc. Traditional zoning code prioritizes a separation of potentially incompatible land uses, such as schools being further away from factories, and requires all building types in a zoning district to have the same minimum yards. A form-based code establishes and preserves desirable characteristics of buildings, public spaces, and unique districts or neighborhoods with a more balanced approach in terms of location/operations, form and use.

A form-based code can also include architectural and landscaping standards, requirements for sign materials and placement, and environmental provisions. Communities can choose to implement form-based codes in specific districts or as a hybrid with conventional zoning code according to their goals.

### Key Differences



## Zoning Ordinance and Subdivision Control Ordinance Update: Form-Based Code (Cont.)

A form-based code is a useful tool to implement the City's Future Land Use Plan, the framework for the future growth of the City of Dexter. The Future Land Use Plan is in Chapter 4 of the City of Dexter Master Plan. It has a general description of the desired pattern of development for the community, followed by a description of the future land use categories on the Master Plan's future land use map.

In most of the future land use categories, building types are listed. "Building type" refers to the building form, usually driven by the structure's initial use which may be different now. For instance, a house building type was likely originally used as a single-family dwelling, but now, depending on its location, may be used as a residence, office or retail.

A form-based code can encourage the preservation or development of certain building types while allowing for flexibility in how they are used. Allowing for a mix of uses on a single lot or in a building can encourage reinvestment and the adaptive reuse of historic buildings, provide new and diverse housing options, or accommodate temporary uses and special events.

### Where Could Form-Based Codes Be Applied In Dexter?

**Downtown:** Preserve and strengthen the existing character of the downtown area as a historic, pedestrian-scaled community, with traditional site and architectural design creating an aesthetically memorable place with vibrant streetscapes and community spaces.

**Baker Road Corridor:** Encourage cohesive development and strategic investments for this mixed-use area to become a walkable corridor that acts as a gateway between the downtown area and adjacent neighborhoods.

**Dexter-Ann Arbor Road Corridor:** Encourage cohesive and distinct development of a mix of commercial, office, service and residential uses within this area which serves as an entrance to the City as well as a transitional area between the historic Village area and the eastern portion of the City.

### What Happens Next?

The City of Dexter Zoning Ordinance Update Sub-Committee will identify specific form-based code standards to implement the goals identified in the Master Plan. The Planning Commission will review those standards, as well as the other Ordinance updates identified by the Sub-Committee, and make recommendations to City Council about which new standards to adopt.

The Zoning Ordinance Update Sub-Committee meetings are open to the public, and are held on the first Mondays of the month at 5pm. Please visit the Sub-Committee webpage for more information. [https://www.dextermi.gov/government/boards\\_and\\_commissions/zoupdate.php](https://www.dextermi.gov/government/boards_and_commissions/zoupdate.php)

City of Dexter  
8123 Main St, 2nd Fl  
Dexter MI 48130  
(734) 426-8303

**Mayor**

Shawn Keough

**Council Members**

Paul Cousins  
Donna Fisher  
Jamie Griffin  
Wa-Louisa Hubbard  
Zach Michels  
Vacant

**City Staff**

**Justin Breyer**

Interim City Manager and Clerk

**Michelle Aniol**

Community Development

**Mike Auerbach**

Assistant Planner

**Dan Schlaff**

Public Utilities Superintendent

**Marie Sherry**

Treasurer/Finance Director/Assessor

**Carol Jones**

Recording Secretary

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The City Offices are located at 8123 Main St, 2nd Floor, above the PNC Bank. Hours are Monday through Friday, 9:00 am to 5:00 pm.

**Elected Officials:**

Shawn Keough, Mayor: [skeough@DexterMI.gov](mailto:skeough@DexterMI.gov) (313) 363-1434  
Paul Cousins, Councilperson: [pcousins@DexterMI.gov](mailto:pcousins@DexterMI.gov) (734) 548-3293  
Donna Fisher, Councilperson: [dfisher@DexterMI.gov](mailto:dfisher@DexterMI.gov) (734) 649-5169  
Jamie Griffin, Councilperson: [jgriffin@DexterMI.gov](mailto:jgriffin@DexterMI.gov) (734) 426-4961  
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Zach Michels, Councilperson: [zmichels@DexterMI.gov](mailto:zmichels@DexterMI.gov) (734) 726-0616

**Staff:**

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Treasurer: [msherry@DexterMI.gov](mailto:msherry@DexterMI.gov) (734) 580-2231  
Community Development: [maniol@DexterMI.gov](mailto:maniol@DexterMI.gov) (734) 580-2233  
Assistant Planner: [mauerbach@DexterMI.gov](mailto:mauerbach@DexterMI.gov) (734) 580-2235  
Utility Billing: [eaiken@DexterMI.gov](mailto:eaiken@DexterMI.gov) (734) 580-2232  
Administrative Assistant: [btusciano@DexterMI.gov](mailto:btusciano@DexterMI.gov) (734) 580-2230  
Public Works: [kaugustine@DexterMI.gov](mailto:kaugustine@DexterMI.gov) (734) 426-8530  
Public Utilities: [dschlaff@DexterMI.gov](mailto:dschlaff@DexterMI.gov) (734) 426-4572

**Utilities After Hour Emergencies: (734) 368-5212**

Spring  
Clean Up  
will be  
May 17th

Spring Clean Up allows for  
expanded bulk item pickup.  
See [www.dextermi.gov](http://www.dextermi.gov) for  
additional information.